



OGC 60-0706

19 MAY 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Machine Translation

1. Mr. Borel together with Mr. Bagnall and Mr. Houston appeared before the House Committee on Science and Astronautics on 13 May 1960. Present for the Committee were:

Overton Brooks, Chairman (D., La.)
David S. King (D., Utah)
George P. Miller (D., Calif.)
Perkins Bass (R., N. H.)
J. Edward Roush (D., Ind.)

2. Mr. Borel read his prepared statement which was commended by the Chairman. Dr. Dostert of Georgetown University as co-witness testified as to the history and nature of his machine translation research and development. He pointed out that his efforts had been controversial and departed from his prepared text and proposed that a test be performed by having the Committee counsel select a random text of perhaps 15,000 words in Russian in the field of organic chemistry and then have the IBM cards key punched, also under the Committee's staff supervision as well as the succeeding computer run. The product would then be sent for evaluation to three scientists in the field, presumably academic types not connected with Georgetown or the sponsors of its experiments.

3. Mr. Bagnall was asked some questions about the scope of the present translation effort and pointed out that while only a modest percentage was fully translated by the Government almost all the Russian material was scanned and the nature of the contents made available to Government and the public. Chairman Brooks

complimented this report for its improvement over prior testimony before the Committee. Mr. Bass was interested in the time currently taken with translations and abstracts, and Mr. King was interested in what the Russian were doing. Mr. Bagnall pointed out that they are making a very big effort in the translation field. Chairman Brooks questioned whether the diversity of the effort in Government did not spread the effort too thin. Mr. Borel replied that in his opinion the diversity was good because of the diverse interests and that through the existing coordination this diversity could be planned. He stated that centralization would be needed for whatever eventual facility was decided upon.

4. Mr. Borel pointed out that the Government was now at the turning point as to whether to put funds into application of research to date and create a central facility. He repeated his remarks in the prepared statement that we were considering proposals by both Georgetown and IBM.

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LAWRENCE R. HOUSTON
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